

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 DHA-02 EB-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00

IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

/083 W

-----087578 071515Z /46

P R 071235Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5427

INFO AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

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E. O. 11652 N/A

TAGS/ PINT, SOPN, HA

SUBJECT: BOLD QUESTIONS AND CAUTIOUSLY PROGRESSIVE ANSWERS

HIGHLIGHT BIRTHDAY INTERVIEWS

1. SUMMARY. CONTINUING HIS POLICY OF GRADUALLY INCREASING HIS ACCESSIBILITY TO THE PRESS AND HIS GREATER FRANKNESS IN RESPONDING TO THEIR INQUIRES, PRESIDENT JEAN-CLAUDE DUVALIER GAVE TWO LENGTHLY INTERVIEWS TO LE PETIT SAMDI SOIR (PSS) AND LE MATIN WHICH WERE PUBLISHED IN CONNECTION WITH THE JULY 3 CELEBRATION OF HIS 26TH BIRTHDAY. THE QUESTIONS ASKED BY PSS EDITOR FARDIN WERE SENSATIONAL IN THE HAITIAN CONTEXT ASKING THE PRESIDENT ABOUT THE RIGHTS OF POLITICAL PRISONERS TO DEFEND THEMSELVES PUBLICLY, POOR ECONOMIC PLANNING, AND RIVALRIES WITHIN THE SACROSANCT DUVALIERIST PARTY. THE PRESIDENT AVOIDED ANSWERING SOME OF THESE QUESTIONS DIRECTLY BUT EMPHASIZED PARTICULARLY PROGRESS MADE IN HUMAN RIGHTS, IN PRESS FREEDOM AND GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES. HE ALSO RESTATED HIS COMMITMENT TO MAKE THE ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS NECESSARY TO ADVANCE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. TAKEN TOGETHER WITH THE UNPRECEDENTED SCOPE OF THE PUBLIC CELEBRATION OF HIS BIRTHDAY, THE PRESIDENTS LATEST STATEMENTS MAKE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IT CLEAR THAT HE US BECOMING AN INCREASINGLY INDEPENDENT AND INNOVATIVE POLITICAL FORCE IN HAITI. END SUMMARY.

2. THE QUESTIONS ASKED BY DIEUDONNE FARDIN, THE EDITOR OF THE INDEPENDENT WEEKLY LE PETIT SAMEDI SOIR ARE THE TOUGHEST THE PRESIDENT HAS EVER DEALT WITH IN PUBLIC, WHEREAS THE PRO-GOVERNMENT LE MATIN WAS CONSIDERABLY Milder IN ITS

INTERROGATION OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE. THE QUESTIONS POSED BY PSS ARE MORE SENSATIONAL THAN THE RESPONSES BUT EVEN IN THE LATTER THERE IS AN UNPRECEDENTED COMMITMENT TO IMPROVEMENT. FARDIN ASKED ABOUT RIVALRIES AND DIVISIONS WITHIN THE DUVALIERIST PARTY, WHETHER INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES COULD STAND FOR ELECTION, ABOUT THE FUTURE OF MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY IN HAITI. OTHER QUESTIONS ASKED THE PRESIDENT TO EXPLAIN HOW HE IS DEALING WITH THE 60 PERCENT UNEMPLOYMENT RATE, WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR NOT ANTICIPATING THE FAMINE, AND WHEN THE PROGRESSIVE "CODE RURAL" WOULD BE APPLIED AS PROMULGATED. ON HUMAN RIGHTS, FARDIN ASKED THE PRESIDENT WHETHER HE WAS PREPARED TO FORBID ARBITRARY ARRESTS OF JOURNALISTS IN PURSUIT OF THEIR DUTIES AND, PERHAPS MOST AUDACIOUSLY, WHEN POLITICAL PRISONERS NOW ARRESTED, INTERROGATED BY YOUR POLICE AND EITHER PARDONED AFTER A CERTAIN TIME OR KEPT IN PRISON, WOULD BE ALLOWED TO PUBLICLY DEFEND THEMSELVES ACCORDING TO THE PROVISIONS OF THE LAW.

3. THE PRESIDENT SKIRTED SOME OF THESE QUESTIONS IN HIS RESPONSES. ON HUMAN RIGHTS HE REFERRED TO HIS AMNESTIES OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AND HAITI'S RECENT PRO-HUMAN RIGHTS VOTE AT THE OAS. HE CALLED FARDIN'S SUGGESTION TO FORM A "LEAGUE FOR THE DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE HAITIAN CITIZEN" PRAISEWORTHY BUT RESERVED JUDGMENT ABOUT WHAT FORM IT SHOULD TAKE.

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4. ON PRESS FREEDOM, THE PRESIDENT SAID THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE LAW REGARDING ARREST OF JOURNALISTS WAS UNDER ACTIVE STUDY. HE REEMPHASIZED THAT HE AND HIS GOVERNMENT WERE OPEN TO CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM BUT NOTED THAT THE PRESS'S RIGHT TO LIBERTY ENDS WHERE THE SECURITY OF THE STATE AND GOVERNMENT BEGIN. ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT DEFINE THIS BOUNDARY, HE DID SAY THAT CRITICISM WAS NOW MORE OBJECTIVE AND HONEST AND NOT ONLY WERE SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT WELCOMED BY THE GOVERNMENT BUT SO TOO WAS THE MEDIA'S CAMPAIGN TO DEEPEN RESPECT IN THE WORLD FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. THE PRESIDENT UNDERLINED THIS IN HIS INTERVIEW WITH LE MATIN STATING THAT THAT HUMAN RIGHTS MUST BE CHERISHED AND DEFENDED IN HAITI WHOSE INDEPENDENCE IS BASED ON THE GREAT PRINCIPLES OF 1789.

5. ON POLITICAL FREEDOMS, THE PRESIDENT SAID THERE WAS NO LEGAL PROHIBITION AGAINST PARTICIPATION BY INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES IN ELECTIONS. HE ADDED DEMOCRATIZATION MUST NOT BE UNDERSTOOD TO MEAN FORMULAS WITHOUT ANY HISTORICAL BASIS BUT HE SAID THE EVENTUAL ACHIEVEMENT OF AN ECONOMIC EQUILIBRIUM WOULD PERMIT A NORMAL DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL PLURALISM IN WHICH EMOTIONALISM WOULD YIELD TO

RATIONALISM.

6. ON RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES, THE PRESIDENT TOLD LE MATIN THAT NEVER HAVE THEY BEEN SO CLOSE, CORDIAL AND EXCELLENT AS RIGHT NOW. WHEN PSS ASKED HIM IF HIS STATEMENTS ON APRIL 22 (REFERRING TO HIS REJECTION OF FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN HAITI'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS) MIGHT DAMAGE HIS GOOD RELATIONS WITH PRESIDENT CARTER'S GOVERNMENT, HE REPLIED THAT "MY DECLARATIONS AS CHIEF OF STATE ARE MADE IN THE FRAMEWORK OF SOVEREIGNTY AND NATIONAL DIGNITY AS WELL AS IN THAT OF A RECIPROCAL POLICY OF NON-INTERFERENCE.

7. IN HIS INTERVIEW WITH LE MATIN, PRESIDENT DUVALIER RETURNED AGAIN TO THE THEME OF " RESTRUCTURING IN DEPTH THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HAITIAN ADMINISTRATION." FIRST SET OUT IN HIS APRIL 6 SPEECH. CERTAIN REFORMS ARE INDISPENSABLE FOR THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF HAITI, HE EMPHASIZED, IN DECLARING INEFFICIENCY AND CORRUPTION.

8. COMMENT. PRESIDENT DUVALIER CONTINUES TO TALK A GOOD GAME AND THE WORDS ARE BEING MATCHED WITH SOME ACTIONS SUCH AS THE RECENT DISMISSALS OF CORRUPT AND SUPERFLUOUS GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES (PORT AU PRINCE 2257), AND THE APPOINTMENT OF MINISTERS WHO APPEAR TO BE IN THE PROCESS OF MAKING SOME REAL CHANGES. IT IS ALSO NOTEWORTHY THAT THE PRESIDENT MORE AND MORE OCCUPIES THE CENTER STAGE. THE ADJECTIVE "JEANCLAUDIST" IS INCREASINGLY USED TO DIFFERENTIATE THE PRESIDENT AND HIS POLICIES FROM THOSE OF HIS FATHER AND MOTHER. THE PUBLIC CELEBRATION OF HIS BIRTHDAY ON JULY 3 WERE MORE LAVISH THAN EVER AND HIS GESTURE OF PROVIDING FREE MOVIES IN PORT AU PRINCE WAS VERY POPULAR. WHILE THE PRESIDENT CLEARLY INTENDS TO MOVE CAUTIOUSLY, AND MUST NEGOTIATE MAJOR CHANGES WITH OTHER POWER BROKERS, IT IS ENCOURAGING THAT HE CONTINUES ON AN UPBEAT TREND.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
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Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
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Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1937060
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BOLD QUESTIONS AND CAUTIOUSLY PROGRESSIVE ANSWERS HIGHLIGHT BIRTHDAY INTERVIEWS
TAGS: PINT, SOPN, HA, (DUVALIER, JEAN-CLAUDE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/6659a66f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009